



## **LEGACIES OF THE KOREAN WAR**

Oral History Project

*www.legaciesofthekoreanwar.org*

Interview with:

**Reverend Chang-Soon Lee**

First Generation

1935, Pyongyang

Interviewed by:

**Deann Borshay Liem and JT Takagi**

Date of Interview:

December 15, 2014

## Japanese Colonial Period

### Religious Life

I am Chan-soon Lee and now I am 79 years old. I was born in North Korea, actually Pyongyang, 1935. 1936 was when the Japanese [had] the overall control of Korea. Korea was under the full control of Japan; it was most difficult time. Japanese people who colonized Korea implemented, I don't know how to describe - in the school we could not speak Korean. If we speak Korean, then we got the punishment. We have to clean the floor of the school if we speak, actually speak Korean. They'll [say] "Oh, you speak Korean." Then you got punishment. And we have to change our last name. I remember my last name was *Yashida*. Actually, my last name is Lee but we should change [it] to *Yashida*, totally different. And we are Christian. My dad was a minister.

My dad was a very religious person. He grew up in Hwanghae-Do, one of the provinces. He used to tell me that he used to go out in the mountain when he was a teen, 16 or 17 years old. He went to mountain alone and looking at the moon and praying. He doesn't know anything about it [religion], but he's praying.

Then later he got married at 17 years old I guess. But later he went to the Pyongyang city, capital city of North Korea now. And he got the news of the Christianity, about God. And he felt, "Oh, this is the one I was looking for." So immediately he became very strong Christian. Then later, that's why he decide to become a minister.

I remember when my dad was ministering in the village. I was happy child. What I remember [is] that every Sunday the church people are very generous, innocent and friendly people. I remember after worship service, we use to have Kong [beans] with sweet potato and sometimes corn...sort of a party after the worship service....

One incident I remember. I was I think less than ten years old. There was a wedding at church and we have small organ. On wedding day, all of a sudden, the organist could not come. So, they had a problem. "What? We don't have an organist? Who's going to play organ?" And some people said, "Oh, Chan-soon, you may play the organ. I wasn't old enough to know that there was the special music for the wedding, so I said, "No, I don't know the wedding music." And they said, "It doesn't matter; whatever you can play, you play." So, I played just one of the hymn I like; so, I did [it]... So I'm the one who play the wedding music; not wedding music, but the organ when I was less than ten years old....

Before the Japanese persecution [became] severe, they allowed the church activity. At the time, 1919, the year is very significant year in the Christian history - I mean Korean Christian history, because that year...Christian movement was very high, like booming. So many people come to church, became Christian. So still we remember 1919...[and] after that, still Christian churches growing.

I think first the Christians are very educat[ed] person[s]. The Korea[n] independent movement actually started from the church. The church leaders are the leader of that movement. So Japanese government worried about the Christian community. That's the main reason they demand, we call [it] bowing to the Japanese emperor. That we call *usang sungbae* [idol

worship]. If you [dis]obey the order, [it's] criminal, against the law; so you get arrested. So many people obey. If they refused to give the bow to Japanese emperor, they get arrested. So there are many people just obey in order not to get arrested. But a few you know, the ministers and some laypersons, they refused. So even they die in prison. *Seongyoja* refers to martyrs. So my dad was one of the group who refused to do that [bow]....

There are a lot of persecution and one time they collect all the iron metal, you know, whatever, copper, you know, [for] war preparation. And I remember one thing. We had a bell at the church and we were asked, demanded, to donate the church bell. And every church I think you know, gave [their] church bell. [But] my dad insisted not to do that. So they come and I remember one evening we had a Wednesday evening service. And my dad was preaching at the pulpit, and all of a sudden two Japanese policemen walked in and took my dad, take him out. I was so scared. "What happened Mom? What happened Mom?" You know, that kind of persecution we had. I don't remember exactly, all I remember was he was took away by policemen. Actually, I remember we didn't give the bell. So, my dad was I think so strong; some sense of stubborn, never gave up against Japanese government. So, he had more persecution than ever I guess, yeah.

My name was *Yashida Chan-soon*. After the World War ended, I never used the Japanese. I forgot. I still remember a little bit, so in Japanese I could say [a few things].

### **Liberation from Japan**

So, when World War II ended, actually Korea was liberated from Japan. I was ten years old. I remember my dad and my dad's friend, they heard the news and you know, dancing around the ground - outside the ground. That was special. At the time, you know, ministers - cannot imagine [it]. Just, you know, happy, true happy, dancing around. He could not stop. He was just always dancing around. That's what I remember, yeah....

After the World War II ended, that [those Christians who had bowed to the emperor] became the big issue in Korean church community because bowing to the Japanese emperor was idol worship, *usang sungbae* [idol worship]. So, [if] you become *usang sungbae*, you are not really Christian. So you know, they had a problem. They [Christians were divided between those who] refused to or [those who] obeyed, you know. So, one time the Korean church split because of that issue, yeah.

### **Pre-war Period**

In North Korea, the Russians at the time, [their] military occupied North Korea, and [it] become the communist country. Then another persecution from communist government. They are anti-Christian. So we had another persecution more severe than before. So, my daddy could not, I mean before Korean War, my daddy could not [do] ministry anymore. He had to escape from the arrest. So, we have so many persecution[s] before the Korean War and after Korean War, too. Because communists are anti-Christian they prevented people to attend church. Communists forced us to come to school even on Sundays. My father vehemently opposed me to go to school on Sundays. He made me to attend church to worship the God. On Monday

---

when I returned to school, I had to “self criticize”. I had to “self-criticize” in auditorium in front of everyone. It was very humiliating and difficult experience. But, I had no choice but to apologize and “self-criticize.” Self-criticism was basically about my teacher forced me to say [that] it was wrong for me to attend school on Sundays. And it was more of a confession. This saga continued every week. Whenever I told my father that I have to go to school on Sunday, my father did not let me go. I went to church since I was afraid of my father. When I returned to school next day, same thing happened. After 2nd or 3rd ”self-criticism”, I just broke down. When I broke down, my teacher just asked me to return to my seat. So I started to break down at the auditorium whenever I had to do “self-criticism.” I was very hurt by this humiliating experience when I was a child. I had to “self-criticize” myself and then talk about what I did wrong. And it was very embarrassing, but then I had to do it because the teacher told me to do it. But my dad was even scarier than the teacher, so I couldn't deny him. And I had to attend Sunday services.

Of course, my father also encountered difficulties as a minister. I remember my dad was a minister at Kungso-gun, Singdung-myeon, the west area of Pyongyang city. One day he decide to go to the south. He did [this] a couple times before. At the time, [it was] relatively easy to cross the border, so he went down to South Korea two times, but he came back because of our family. The third time, he decide just go forever because he cannot - it is very dangerous to stay there [in North Korea as a minister]. After he arranged to leave, then we moved to the Pyongyang city because Pyongyang city is relatively secure because there are so many people. They don't know who are who, you know. So we registered there without my dad. So my mother and my brother and sister, we rented a house. And one day, he [father] came back. You know, [I was] surprised. So what happened - he got arrested when he tried to cross the border. But that's a long story. God helped him to escape from there [prison]. Otherwise, he was really dead over there. Anyway, all of a sudden, he came back home and we [were] surprised. And since then, he was living [in] hid[ing], I think about almost one year.

### **Korean War Memories**

Then Korean War broke out. Actually we were leaving Pyongyang and my mom went [to] her house in Hwanghae-do [in] the country to [give] birth a baby. I was born in Hwanghae-do. Actually my [hometown] is Pyongyang because I lived in [there] until, I think, kindergarten. Then my dad began to start the ministry, so we moved other place, several places, three places I remember.

I remember the Korean War. On Sunday morning, I heard the special announcement from the radio saying that at noon, we have a special announcement. Then after worship service, the whole family with my dad watching the radio. The radio announcer said that South Korean army invaded North, 10 or 20 kilometer, marching toward north. Then all of a sudden, we say, "Wow, the war is started." We were expecting because we thought if war broke out, South Korean army will marching in easily to North Korea. And we [would be] delivered from the communism. That's what we expected. They used to say, “We have lunch at Pyongyang and dinner at Sinuiju” [city on border of China]. We believed that. The [South Korean] army marching north...having lunch at Pyongyang. So, we were so happy actually. But [that] evening, the radio said the North Korean army defeated them back to the South. And they were 10 and 20 kilometers south, we

pushed them back. We [my family] didn't believe it. That's a lie, you know. The next morning then they announced that they pushed South army more than that. Still we did not believe it... We used to hear the radio broadcasting from Seoul. And third day, there's no broadcasting radio from Seoul. And we, all of us became, "Oh, that might be true." We went outside. There's a big poster marking where the North Korean army [went] marching down to the south. That's how I remember the Korean War.

I was 15 years old when, you know, Korean War started. I was born 1935, and 1950, the Korean War broke out. So, I was exactly 15 years old. I was living at the time at Pyongyang. Then soon we had air bombing. I still remember B29 bomber. We used to be scared by the bombing. We began to hear the "Woong, woong, woong," you know; the airplane coming.... When people hear the sound/noise of the bomber they went outside to see the bombers. If a bomber does not fly toward your direction that means you are safe because a bomber does not change the course easily. If a bomber does not fly directly toward them, everyone watched bombing because it meant they were safe; that direction is not ours, just different direction; then we are safe because they don't move. We could see the bomb dropping. Each airplane, they dropped 8 bombs at a time. The group is 8, 8 airplanes dropped 8 bombs at a time. That's 8 times 8 is 64 bombs at a time. That group comes continually, you know....

So actually, daytime, we went out to suburb, outside, stay there, and at night, come home and take food, everything. During the night, they don't bomb.... Bombing was very destructive but we still watched it... In case of a flight jet, it was different because it was too fast and unpredictable. Everyone ran away when they heard a flight jet's noise. We called flight jets *sseksse-gi*, based on how it sounded, and we hid whenever we heard the noise.

They bomb continually, you know, like a carpet [bombing].... We believe it's American airplane, and later we know that it's U.N. I remember the jet from Australia is different from American. They have two [types of plane] bodies you know....

After the war broke out people living in Pyongyang went to church or to farm areas during daytime.

## **Refugee Life**

### **Family Separation**

Based on my memory, my experience as a refugee was not that difficult. As you know, the communist army pushed back way to the south. Then there's famous Inchon landing operation by General MacArthur. They reoccupied Seoul and continued to march to north. I remember October, that year, 1950. All of a sudden, we were liberated again. That was really you know, exciting event moment. It was an unbelievably happy and joyous event for many people.

Many people danced to celebrate and welcomed the U.N. military. It was especially happy moment for Christians. My daddy, of course, came out from the hidden place [his hiding place] and celebrate[d]. My dad began traveling [to] the places where he used to minister. And he led revival meeting[s]. It goes almost one week. One church had one week revival meeting and another church and another church, almost more than one month. We were living, still staying in Pyongyang....

Then, I think after one month later, my uncle came in, "We have to fight, we have to join South Korean army in the fight against communists". I didn't know what he meant. So why? Because the North Korean army was marching, pushing down the U.N. forces. Then we saw many refugees, civilian people coming down from north. And we began to worry about the situation.

I was 15 years at the time, but actually I didn't know the whole situation. So at the time, I didn't know what that means. Then later, we found the South Korean and U.N. forces withdraw from North Korea area to the south. A little later, North Koreans who left - who fled up north when the South Korean army came in, came back with the Chinese, and that's where another war began, kind of another battle.

Well, then, many people, even in Pyongyang city began to leave their home. But we could not leave without my dad.[who was travelling doing revival meetings] So, we were waiting for my dad until the last minute. I remember the day exactly. That's December 3<sup>rd</sup>. There's many confusion, hearing, saying that we are safe, but people are leaving, escaping. There's a lot of confusion. I went out and looking around the school, there's several schools, and the school ground, they are full of U.N. trucks, tanks, everything. So, when I saw them, you know, we are relieved; so it's okay as long as they're here. Then I came back and told my mom, "We don't have to worry about it because there are so many trucks, tanks, everything." Next day I went there, so surprised. I could not see any of the trucks, tanks. In one night they all left. I couldn't imagine. Later, I knew that could be possible. Then people began to really you know, [become] confused and worry.

So we cannot wait anymore [for] my dad. So we decide to leave the home. We locked the door, nailed everything, and we went out. The problem came [when] we could not cross river, Daedong river, because so many thousand, thousand people who came from north - they [were] stuck because of the river. Through the whole river bank, there is thousands people but there's no way to cross. There's a bridge, a temporary bridge built by U.N., that's burnt out. The main bridge was bombed already, a long time ago. The U.N. troops built the temporary bridge, but that burned out. And the railroad bridge is half damaged. The young people without any package [baggage], they could cross the bridge. And many people crossed, but the children and the old people, they could not, no.

My uncle suggested he and I have to cross the bridge because we are old enough. [But] my mom and my brother, sister, and my niece, aunt, would stay there [behind]. That's what he suggested. But my mom said "No. We have to do [it] together, whether we cross or not." My uncle's family, my aunt, my two nieces, brother and sister, my mom and my younger sister and brother, and me. Oh, we had a baby brother at the time, two years old, yeah....

I was too young to be responsible for my family and my mother was simply a housewife. So, we didn't have any ability to [understand] the situation. So, as I said, we waited until last minute. Then we saw that everything's gone. Then we decide to leave, but we could not cross river, spending whole day and tired; came home and opened the old door, and stayed inside the home. Then that night, the whole city was burned. There's big fires. I cannot forget... Later I saw the movie *Quo Vadis* and the emperor Nero burned [the] whole city. It's like that exactly - the whole city was burned out, what you call, ashes, ash with the fire. It came down on the roof [of] my

house. Everybody come out worried about [catching] fire and watching. That was a horrible scene I ever seen.

Then people really worried. And in the morning, dawn, early in the morning, as soon as dawn comes out, we just rush out, leaving behind everything as it is; no clothing, just simply you know, just food. But [it was] the same situation [as] before, the previous day; no way to cross the river. What can you do? And there was a lot of rumors - "If you go this way, you can cross the river." Then people rushing that way. And some people, "If you go this way, you can cross." Then people, you know, going back and forth.

Later we heard that if you go to the north, then you may be able to cross the river walking; so we went there. That place is, we call the Seongyo-ri. There's a very shallow river. So many people cross walking. It goes about this high.[gestures almost to shoulders] Every pack, you know, put on their head. Then they walked across. And, as I said, the river bank, there's so many people preparing to cross....

Anyway, so we decide to cross the river walking. We just had pants you know, and the pack up here, and we almost ready to cross. Then all of a sudden, American jet, flying in front of us and they're shooting. The people keep saying, "Oh, that's warning shooting, warning shooting;" They mean 'don't go out of the city. You are safe, don't worry.' We were told that you don't have to go to south. I don't know why they did it, because they tried to avoid the chaos? People didn't believe that, but when we heard the jet shooting we thought, some people thought, "Oh, that's warning shot, not to cross the river."

But the people keep crossing the river. Then another second, behind us, there is shooting. Then we found actually – they[re] shooting [at] us. Then chaos; everybody you know, begin to run away. I just remember trying to run away. But there's no place to hide. At the time, I still remember, there's a river bank; no place to hide.

There's many *dalguji* [ox carts] and the people tried to hide in. And someone said they shoot *dalguji* because *dalguji* is a cart; the Chinese army, they came down with that, what you call it? They call it *macha* [cart][i.e. that they are shooting because they think the carts are Chinese Red Army carts] So, they just come out and run away, but people cannot spread [out], so many people. It goes on about maybe 10 or 15 minutes. Then all airplane gone. Then people just shouting, calling their families, you know, really chaos, really chaos. Chaos. Oh, yeah, we found many people died, hurt, even cows. I remember cow dying. So, we just run around. Then after about 30 minutes, our family all get together, and we are all safe. So, we just run away and left that place. But we saw the people still crossing the river, but we couldn't do it anymore, so we just gave up; then came down to the south [part of the river] where we started from. Then we saw the small boat, full boat, crossing the river. And we just watching them. They are lucky, you know. Then I saw all of a sudden, the boat was [tilting] this way, and it just turn over. In [front of] our eyes, some people just you know, swimming. Then everybody saying, "Oh, oh, oh, oh." But we couldn't do anything. They went down there. Even we could not stay there anymore.

So, we went [on] about 30 minutes, 40 minutes, and then we found there's another big line [of people]. And there's a boat. And the boat, you know, they're crossing, carrying the people. So

there's a big line up. If you wait, the line is [so long], there's no way to get to that boat. So, we were just watching, "Wow, they're lucky, too." Then all of a sudden, the jet came flying overhead and the people scared. Then they all ran away.

Since then, the first bomb, the shooting, then every time we saw the jet, the people, you know, scared. And everyone just ran away. At the time, my mom said, "Everybody come follow me." I don't know where she got the wisdom or risk, I don't know. So, we follow her. After maybe 10, 20 minutes, the jet is gone. And the people gathered again. But we were the first people [on the line] there.

And the boat came, but it was small so it could not carry all our family. So I think woman and children [first]; they help all the family cross river. And this boat come to carry us. Later, I found the boat owner is not the owner actually. He was one of the refugees. Just for short time, he was working for the money. And then he thought it's too late, too dangerous to continue. And he just said, "No more." He was trying to go down south. My mom was so desperate, without us. So, she asked him, "Please one more time, one more time." Then he said, "No, I don't want to." Then she said, "I give you money, whatever you ask." But he says "I don't need money anymore." So, he tried to go and my mom grab him, you know. "You cannot go without my son, my family. We are going out because of them. If we leave them, no meaning [for us] to go out." And they struggled. We saw far away the struggle. My mom grabbed his leg, but he could not really get away. My mom said later that he said, "Okay, it's okay, I'm fine, it's okay. I'll just one more time." So, he came and took her family across.

That's how we crossed the river. But actually that's half of the river, and the rest of the area is yellow with ice on. If you walk, the ice is not strong enough, it could come down.... There was a lot of spaces that we have to walk on the ice. Ice is so shallow, if you walk, you fall....

After that, the other side area called Songyo-ri . Songyo-ri is south of Pyongyang. And there is an airport. Then we have to cross that area. That is the place where there was a U.N. military depot carrying all ammunitions, every equipment. They keep [it] over there because they could not cross the river by the train. So, that's a temporary depot. They put a lot of equipment, ammos, everything there, like a small hill. [Because] they cannot carry them back [over the river], they just burn them out and then explosion came. You cannot imagine; keep exploding, exploding. So dangerous, and people just run this way and over there and then that way. If you're not lucky enough, then you may get hurt, die, or injured. Other people went to the house to cover up. [for protection] And the houses are shaking. Then everybody is coming out, you know. We don't know where to go, but we just rushing this way, that way. Then luckily we passed through. And we looked behind us [at all the] exploding. We passed dangerous area. Then my mom just fell down. It was just all day, carrying baggage, maybe my brother and that young girl. Wow, we are alive. Then the first night we stayed some house there. We couldn't go in the room, of course, [because it's] full of refugees all around.

So, we stayed night one, first night. That was the beginning of refugee's [life]. The next morning we wake up and went out to street. There's a pack of refugees. There's a main road. And parallel, there's a railroad, too. It was full of people.

And you can imagine...there's so many people so even it's hard to pass people. And many problem come [for] families, they just separate, lose their family. All of a sudden, you know, "Where is Dad? Where is Mom? Where is the children?" People keep calling. So many people had to keep moving. It's really chaos. And that happened to us, too. All of a sudden my uncle say, "Oh, oh, where is my wife?" Aunt just disappeared. He told us, "Okay, keep going. I try to find my wife, and join you." That's it. We never met them, still. We never met him again. That's the last [time we] see [them]; we separated. Still we don't know whether he met his wife and children and went back to North Korea. I don't know. That happened to us.

My mom had a string and [tied to your] wrist like you know, a dog. It looks funny but that was really wise decision. Otherwise, all of a sudden, just a moment, you don't see your child; then you cannot find. You even lose your main family. So, my mom, you know, just had a string and hold it. That's a wise, yeah, wisdom; mother's wisdom.

Then we just joined I guess, the flood of the refugee people. I think about almost one month, and I still remember - it was so hard to walk every day with [hands] full of packages. And you have to find the place where you can stay, so you have to go out early enough so you can get room. You walked the whole day. Later we check how long we came, and it's always, maybe three or four miles a day. So every day, walk out and eat and carry and walk; so tired-and stay [somewhere]....

That continued until, okay, one interesting story there. One night we could not found a room. But then we [found] a little small cow barn, and we made a space right next to the cow. We slept beside the cow. That night was Christmas Eve. Then I joke around saying that you know, we spent the night, the first Christmas after we fled from North, like Jesus Christ; where he was born....

So [then] we had to go across the Imjin River. That was the only way. It was frozen, but the ice wasn't thick enough. So, we had to put our bags and stuff tied to a rope and drag it on our way to the south side. When we crossed the river, we met South Korean soldiers. And they told us to give [them] all your North Korean currency, money. I remember them taking it and burning all the money. And they took us to a place where now is Gimpo Airport. At that time, it was brick factory. We rested there the first night we came down to southern side.

So, the night at the brick factory we're staying in, many people were staying there, many refugees from North Korea. The locals there who were living near the area, the local youngsters came in. They said they were looking for spies. And then they started; they were suspicious of youngsters from North Korea. They started beating them. We were terrified. It was horrible. They came to us. They asked us, too. Then my mother said, "We believe in Jesus. We're not the type who would spy on South Korea." Then they kept being suspicious of us. And then our mother said, "We're long time believers. Our husband is a pastor." They replied, saying, "Then why don't you, you know, praise one of the Lord's Prayer, you know, give us a praise." At that time we did the Lord's Prayer, we did praises. And they said, "Okay, you guys are not communists." So other youngsters who came down from North Korea asked us if we could tell them that we're together, we're with you guys, so we won't get beat up. So, we did that and some of them didn't get beat up.

[When] we left the factory, we walked towards south. We couldn't go into Suwon or Seoul, so we went to Ju-an. We crossed the mountain and we were going toward some city that I'm not aware of. During the journey, of course, the main issue is how to eat. So, whenever you go the house, if you find something to eat, you're lucky. And you carry as much as you can carry. You know, of course, it's very hard. But we survive.

One night we stayed one place and all of sudden we heard the wagon and marching. Very big sound. People say, "What's that? Who are they?" They said Red Chinese army marching down the south. So, what's the use to keep going. So we stayed there and [until] U.N. troops come back.

And I think we stayed about one month; a very, very difficult time, though, to eat. So we sold some you know, materials we carry from the north. My mom you know, think it's very valuable things. So she sold them you know, for food. And sometimes she went [to the] mountain and cut the tree, make wood, and sold to the U.N. troops. That's the way [to] keep surviving there. Many people began to go back to North Korea, following the U.N. troops. So, we followed them, too, you know. Actually we have no home town. Like the farmers, we don't have any home town to go. But we follow them. Everybody goes back. And we met the Korean marine corps at Yango, which is near the Imjin River. That was the boundary between the South [and North] Korean army where they were negotiating, you know, treaty.

The Korean marine corps, they said, "Who are you?" [We said,] "We are going to try to go back to our home land." They say, "You're crazy. There's a battle. You cannot go anymore." So, we stayed there about of couple years.

### **Post War Period**

So, after the war, I then did nothing. I don't remember particular things about the treaty.[armistice] But then because my interest was studying, and since I flunked [lost] one year, I wanted to kind of catch up. So, my only interest was studying. Yeah, I was happy that the war ended.

I had to work, you know, to survive and everything. Then there's the church, and one pastor - we heard there was pastor came back to begin the worship services again. So, we went there and met him. Luckily, he knew my daddy's friend who used to minister at North Korea. So, we sent a letter to him. The letter said "We were wondering where you are, how you are. And I'm so happy to hear about you...."

At the time, I was studying, doing the business, following the other people. I was 16 or 17. What I did? I bought the salt from Incheon area. There's a big [salt mine] and they come with a bus. The next day, I go to the rural area and sold the salt, and I can get double [the price]. Well, anyway, I started that kind of business. Then later I bought a bicycle and carried more; then rice. Get the rice from the river area and sell in the Incheon area. And I carried the salt, you know, back and forth.

Then this minister wrote a letter, "You have to come down to Masan. At the time I said, "I appreciate your offer, but I better stay here because I started working and getting some money and I have to support my family. Dad is not here. I am the eldest son, so I am responsible for my family. So I'm going to stay here, keep doing my business, salt business." But second letter came, and he said in the letter, "You don't know anything about the future. So, why don't you come down as I said?" It was very hard for me to move down, over there; I mean create everything over here. But later, I found, you know, American ways; I would say if somebody asking "Do it this way" and they're, "Oh, no, I want to do this way," then I would say, "Oh, I respect your opinion, your decision. Go ahead with your opinion." If he said that way, my future was totally different. But he said, "No, come now. You have to go to school. It's for your family in the future." My dad's friend asked us to come over to Masan city but we had no place to stay. So, he says to us to go to orphanage. My mom worked there, and me and my sister and my brother attended school there; and from around ninth grade to eleventh grade I spent studying there. I graduated and after two years, I attended Seoul Methodist Seminary....

So, since I had to serve in Korean army [all men have to serve], I went through the officer course, which they trained me from lower rank to being an officer [in] Korean Marine corps. I worked in Korean Marine corps before I came to America, and I got a chance to come here to America in 1971.

### **Emigration from Korea Resettlement/Life in the United States Religious Life**

I came here to US as an international student. At that time, there were a lot of Korean immigrants, and a lot of work had to be done to help them get adjusted to American life. So I was going to Ohio Seminary School, but then one of the pastor I knew here told me to stay in SoCal to help out-help the immigrants to adjust to America. The choice was, if I worked in Southern California, I could get a green card, which meant I could bring my family over to US. That was like a great motivation for me to work at a Korean church [for] two years. First year I worked part time. And rest of two years, I worked as an assistant pastor.

I helped Korean immigrants; there were a lot of jobs that I did to help them. After that I went to Claremont Seminary School of Theology and I graduated after three years. I got an MA.

After that, I went to Wilshire United Methodist Church. I was a pastor there. I started a small congregation. That was my first congregation after seven years living in America. Majority of the church now became Korean, although there are some [other] ethnic groups still.

### **Family Reunion**

So, in 1989 I had my first chance to visit Pyongyang. It was during the time North Korea started opening opening their doors to other visitors. At this time I came in with other pastors. I didn't know much about North Korea at that time; [I had] a lot of bias opinion about them. It was a good experience that I visited them. I always heard that North Korea, they're looking to start another war again in South Korea. But what I realized was that their economic means [can't]

support this war or invasion. They're very financially unstable. Their airport, compared to Gimpo Airport, there's only three airplanes. And nobody got off except us. A lot of people live very poor, just like the fifties in South Korea; Pyongyang was, some people say it's maybe a little different, but I realize they were having a difficult life. I felt great pity towards them. Since we are the same ethnic group, we share same roots. I felt great pain and pity towards them.

So my father, I always wanted to know more about my father in North Korea. There were some Asians in Canada and people in America to help me write letters to North Korea to find my dad and [get] any news about my dad. There were no replies whatsoever,,, I wanted to know if my father was alive or dead. That was my most important interest about my dad because yes, it would be nice if he was alive and be able to meet him....

In 1995 we started a music concert in our church. We started to get donations, make a fundraiser for North Korean orphans. It was pretty successful. We were aiming for \$80,000.00. At that time, it was a big money but many churches joined together and made \$120,000.00. Yeah, \$120,000.00; built new factory in North Korea. We supplied ingredients to make noodles from China to North Korea. We passed this project to Korean United Methodist Church Association, and they took over and officially called the Five Bread Two Fish Mission - meaning Jesus' miracle, five bread, two fish, yeah.

### **War Legacies**

If there was no war, I wouldn't be able to flee from North Korea and I probably had to become a communist. If I think back, that's just too scary. I can't imagine [having] no freedom. This is my confession. I was able to go to South Korea because of the war. [Because of] the war, I could be a servant of God and serve as a pastor. It took a lot of sacrifices, including my dad's death. But because of those sacrifices, I was able to become a pastor. I thank God. I can't complain. God saved me from North Korea....

Okay, so the war didn't end yet. We are still in the middle of the war, and I guess one of the tragedies is the division between South and North Korea and the families that are separated between the parallel line. There are about ten million families who were separated, who still suffer from that pain. And many of them died. However, people who are still left like me still suffer. I know that youngsters who went through the war such as, you know, my little brother and sister, don't remember much about the war. But it is still a suffering for people like me. This war and this division has impacts on South Korea's politics, culture and religion, giving a hard time to all those areas.

The vision of unification of North and South Korea - people say they want this unification to happen. But the ways to reach these goals are different for each and every one of us. What I believe is there are two ways in reaching this unification. One is to have war with North Korea and conquer North Korea. And two is reaching this unification through negotiation between two governments. What I think works is number two because number one, nobody wants it; even U.S. don't want to go [to war] in a way with North Korea. And it's impossible. Then what's left is number two, going through negotiation. In South Korea there are people who wants to negotiate. However, this is difficult because U.S. is behind South Korea and China is behind North Korea

pressuring them. But we have to overcome this pressure to make a negotiation between two governments.

In South Korea some people are labeled as pro-North Korea because some people say that [wanting] negotiation as the way means you are pro-North Korea, which means that they follow North Korean way. Personally, I think China won't give up and will take over North Korea if the government collapses in North Korea. And that's why China is trying to control North Korea, and especially right now in terms of globalization where China wants to make treaties with other nations. North Korea has to stay calm. But this young leader, Kim Jong-un, doesn't stay calm, and that's trouble for China. Therefore, I think negotiation is the way to unification, and culturally, financially we have to live together.

So, at Washington, D.C., we filed a petition as a community of the Korean United Methodist Church Association. This petition was about this war [still] going. [There should be] a peace treaty and end the war so we could, you know, it makes easier for people to go back and forth, and it'll open the doors for unification.

The thing about that is there are people who are separated; families like me whose families are separated. This is one of the reasons why I came to North Korea, you know, in search of my dad. But that's just additional reason. The main reason [for] the peace treaty is for sake of unification.